X137 *Citrullus vulgaris* Schrad. (4937, 4999) Photograph 57.

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| !h5: Bushman..... | dam |
| ǁganakwe Bushman... | n‖an |
| ǁgikwe Bushman..... | n‖an |
| Naron Bushman..... | n‖a-ǂ |
| Eastern !khû Bushman | -t'a-ma |

This plant, one of the melons and commonly known as the tsama, has stout six-foot vines half an inch in diameter at the base and a quarter of an inch at the tip. They are covered rather densely with light brown hairs, which turn white and stiff with age. The vines are usually prostrate, but occasionally festoon themselves over grasses and low shrubs with the help of small Y-shaped tendrils, curly at the tips. The leaves are borne on two-inch stalks and are hairy on the ribs, dull green, rough to the touch and deeply lobed. Each plant produces male and female flowers. They are an inch in diameter and pale yellow, and the fruits which follow are rounded and up to six inches in diameter and six and a half pounds in weight. As many as 34, of all sizes, have been counted on one plant. The rind, densely hairy when young but later quite smooth, is dark green mottled longitudinally with light green, and contains a crisp, juicy, tasteless white flesh in which numerous flattened brown seeds are embedded. The melons can endure heavy frosts without becoming spoilt, but the rest of the plant is very susceptible. The frosts, however, merely hastens its death for it is in any case an annual.

This melon is indigenous to south-west Asia and the warm dry regions throughout Africa. The water-melon is merely an improved variety of the same species, which has been known in Egypt and Babylonia since the beginning of history (Marloth, 1913-1925: III: II: 205). The tsama was widespread but patchy along the route of the expedition, and areas of abundant melon alternated with long stretches where it was not seen. It was not confined to the sand but grew also on the hard soil of the pans.

262 312 824 The tsama is unquestionably the most important plant to the Bushmen in this part of the Kalahari. They are known to use it as their sole source of water for months on end and it is extremely doubtful whether they would be able to live permanently in the Kalahari without it. Its importance is [184] shown by the fact that one group of Bushmen in the central Kalahari had ● [244] a small patch of tsama which they had grown from seed, and the Bushmen are not as a rule agriculturalists. Nevertheless, the tsama is not an infallible standby, for the reasons given in the discussion on *Citrullus naudinianus*, and when the need arises the Bushmen can and must substitute more meagre but at the same time more reliable sources of water, for example from *Sansevieria scabrifolia*. When it is used for drinking-water 252 262 312 the melon is opened at the top like an egg and the central portion cut out and eaten. The rest of the pulp is then mashed inside the rind with a stick to a watery mass which is half drunk and half eaten, the pips being put aside and later roasted and pounded (without being peeled) to make an edible meal. The melons are sometimes roasted before being eaten, which adds a little flavour, and they may be cut up and mixed with meat to form a stew, which is conveniently cooked in the rind itself. Although no bitter specimens of the tsama were found along the route of the expedition, they do occur. Their flesh is poisonous and unfit for human consumption, but their seeds are free of poison and edible after roasting.

000 At some villages of Bakalahari (which are a Bantu tribe), the tsama is regularly cultivated. These and wild melons are collected and stored under shelter, and goats, horses, cattle and even dogs are kept with tsama as the main source of water. The livestock use the melon more economi-